

THE RECEPTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF HUNGARY BY THE LEADERS OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM

At noon on Thursday, November 4/17, 2022, the Leaders of the Local Churches of Jerusalem welcomed to a reception and a meal Her Excellency the President of Hungary Mrs Katalin Novák in the guest house of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, which is led by the Most Reverend Hassam Naum. Mrs Katalin Novák was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense and the Ambassador of Hungary in Ramallah, Mr Csaba Rada.

At this reception, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos spoke on behalf of the Heads of the Churches through the following address in English:

Madame President,

Mr Ambassador,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome you warmly to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to our Patriarchate, and we wish to express our appreciation for your visit. Your presence here is a powerful and important sign of your recognition of and interest in the challenges that the Christian presence and the Churches are facing here.

We are thankful for the long-standing and good relationship between the Government of Hungary and our Patriarchate. We are

especially grateful for the significant contribution that the Government of Hungary made to the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and we are also aware of the further help that the Government has made to another project under the sponsorship of the Franciscans in Cana of Galilee.

We are also appreciative of the ongoing concern that the Government of Hungary has for the well-being of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and in the broader region of the Middle East. All this practical and moral support means so much to the Christian community and to the leaders of the Churches, and we cannot emphasise too much the value that we place on this relationship between the Government and the people of Hungary and the Holy Land.

Our role as the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land is to serve and protect the Holy Places, among them the principal sites of the Church of the Nativity, which contains within it the site of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church of the Resurrection, where the sites of the crucifixion and the resurrection are venerated. Our mission in the service of the Holy Places is to ensure the integrity of the religious character of the Holy Land in general, and the Christian character of this region in particular.

Recent years and recent events have seen a new and deeper unity of purpose as the Heads of the Churches have worked together. We are united in this common mission. In this regard, it is significant that we are meeting today here at Saint George's, the home of the Anglican Archbishop, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our brother, Archbishop Hosam, both for his hospitality and for his leadership.

As Heads of the Churches, we are doing our best at every level to help Christians remain in the Holy Land, and we are also making every effort to welcome pilgrims, who are once again flocking to the Holy Land in increasing numbers as we move

into a post-pandemic world. Both those who live here as well as those who come here on pilgrimage, are close to our hearts, and as Church leaders we never forget the importance of this pastoral and spiritual mission.

We wish you success in your mission here, and we welcome you as a pilgrim. MAY God bless you as you move about the Holy Land, and as you carry out the duties of your high office on behalf of the people of Hungary.

As a token of our deep appreciation for the commitment of the Government of Hungary to the Holy Land and for all that you are doing here, on behalf of our colleagues and brothers, we wish to invest you with the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre.

Thank you.

On this visit, His Beatitude presented the President with a cross and the other Leaders also offered their gifts.

Her Excellency the President thanked for this honour and promised that her country's interest in the Christians of the Holy Land will continue to be manifested.

The President will visit Holy Sepulchre on Saturday 6th/19th November 2022 in a private visit.

From Secretariat-General